

Indiana Dunes State Park



Group Programs 2006-2007

In addition to regular public programs such as those found on the monthly interpretive program schedule, the interpretive service offers private programming for schools, scouts and other groups by reservation. The following information should help you plan an eventful and educational trip that is sure to leave an impression on your group.

Indiana Dunes State Park, established in 1925 as Indiana's fourth State Park, is located in Porter County. It consists of 2,182 acres of primitive, historical, and amazingly unique Hoosier landscape. Some of the most diverse flora and fauna of the Midwest reside in its sand dunes, beaches, marshes, swamps, savannas, and woodlands.

Three miles of beach afford spectacular views of Lake Michigan and offer swimming opportunities for those visiting during the summer season. More than sixteen miles of hiking trails are available year-round and lead visitors through a variety of habitats. Trails range in difficulty from easy to rugged. Picnic areas are located throughout the park with tables, charcoal grills, toilet facilities, playground equipment, shelters, and play fields. Picnic shelters can be reserved for a fee by calling 1-866-6CAMPIN or online at www.camp.in.gov. Otherwise, they are available on a first-come, first-served basis. Tent camping is available for organized youth groups under adult supervision.

The Interpretive Naturalist Service of the park has been introducing visitors to the dunes since 1927. Naturalists currently operate out of the Nature Center where a spacious auditorium, exhibits, live animals, and wildlife observation area delight visitors year-round. The following programs can be reserved for your group. Additional programs on other topics can often be designed to meet your specific needs and the needs of your students.

Sense-ational Journey

Goal: To increase student awareness of the dunes environment by encouraging utilization of multiple senses.

Students will learn to hone their senses and how to use them to their advantage. They will also discover how animals use senses to help them survive. Weather permitting; we will end with a short hike to a marsh.

Program availability: Year-round

Age group: Preschool-2nd

Min./Max. group size: 10/variable

Location & length: Indiana Dunes State Park Nature Center, 30-45 minutes

Who Goes Where?

Goal: To help students learn about park wildlife, habitats, and food chains.

Like pieces of a puzzle, many plants and animals come together to make one perfect picture. Students see this demonstrated by exploring the parts of various park habitats and food chains. Weather permitting; an exploratory hike through different habitats is included.

Program availability: Year-round

Age group: 1st-5th grade

Min./Max. group size: 10/variable

Location & length: Indiana Dunes State Park Nature Center, 30-45 minutes

The Care & Feeding of a State Park

Goal: To introduce students to the significance of natural resource management.

Natural areas such as those in the park take a lot to maintain their ecological integrity. Students discover the challenges of maintaining healthy ecosystems and the tools we use to do it during this illustrated program and slide show.

Program availability: Year-round

Age group: 5th grade and up

Min./Max. group size: 10/50

Location & length: Indiana Dunes State Park Nature Center, 30-45 minutes

Changing Sands Hike

Goal: To help students explore the concept of ecological succession and learn to identify different stages of succession based on the presence of different plants and animals.

This hike is based on Professor Henry Cowles' work with succession in the late 1800's at the dunes. Students will hike along watching the landscape change before their eyes, from open beach to thick forests, and everything in between!

Program availability: Year-round

Age group: 5th grade and up

Min./Max. group size: 10/variable

Location & length: Indiana Dunes State Park Pavilion/Trail #3, 1-2 hours

Natural Architecture

Goal: To equip students with skills to differentiate and assess different plant and animal communities.

Students get hands-on field experience and gain perspective as a natural resource manager. This short talk and hike (weather permitting) will cover different opportunities for students to understand what is necessary for healthy ecosystems to thrive.

Program availability: Year-round

Age group: 9th grade and up

Min./Max. group size: 10/20

Location & length: Indiana Dunes State Park Nature Center, 45-60 minutes

NOTE: Reservations can be made between 6 months and two weeks of your planned visit. In lieu of paying a standard gate fee to enter the park, scheduled groups simply pay a \$1 per person program fee (paid staff and students eligible for free lunch are free). Self-guided brochures are available for teachers/group leaders who would like to expand their field trips or lead hikes on their own.